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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 9, 2005

THIS REPORT PRESENTS THE TURKISH PRESS SUMMARY UNDER THREE THEMES:

HEADLINES

BRIEFING

EDITORIAL OPINION

HEADLINES

MASS APPEAL

New Torture Scandal in Ramadi - Aksam
Washington Times: Gold Medal to Turks for Anti-Americanism -
Aksam
Hizbulullah Demonstrators Urge Syria Not to Leave Lebanon -
Milliyet
Bush: Freedom Will Prevail in Middle East - Sabah
Russia Kills Separatist Chechen Leader Maskhadov - Milliyet
Bush Assigns 'Hawkish' Envoy Bolton to UN - Sabah
Assignment of Bolton to UN is Bush's 'Slap' at UN - Milliyet
Clinton to Undergo Heart Surgery - Sabah

OPINION MAKERS

US Troops Make Movie of Torture in Iraq - Zaman
Abu-Ghraib Comes to Ramadi - Yeni Safak
Erdogan, Baykal Stand Together Against Armenian 'Genocide' -
Yeni Safak
Maskhadov 'Martyred' by Russian Army - Yeni Safak
Hizbulullah Takes Stage, Lebanon Divided into Two - Cumhuriyet
Hizbulullah Urges 'Occupier' Syria to Stay in Lebanon -
Radikal
Abbas Criticizes Israel for Delay in Withdrawal - Cumhuriyet
Israels Test New Lora Missiles - Yeni Safak
London Mayor: Al-Qaeda Terror Inspired by Israel -
Cumhuriyet
Kosovo PM resigns - Zaman
Georgia's FM Zurabishvili Due in Ankara Tomorrow - Radikal

BRIEFING

EU Urges Ankara to Sign Protocol, Continue Reforms: The European Union's Enlargement Commissioner, Olli Rehn, said on Tuesday that a change in mentality is needed for Turkey to embrace democratic reform and become part of the EU. Rehn called on Ankara to put an end to the torture of prisoners, and made a visit to a rehabilitation center for victims of torture in Istanbul. Rehn said it is important for Turkey to move in time for an upcoming EU report that will review progress on democratic reforms. The report will be published in November, one month after the EU and Turkey are set to begin membership talks. 'It will be embarrassing for Turkey to receive a critical review one month after the opening of the negotiations,' Rehn noted. Rehn's visit was overshadowed by a police crackdown on a women's rally in Istanbul last weekend. Brussels sharply criticized the police for using 'disproportionate force' against the demonstrators, mostly women. Rehn also called on Ankara to extend its customs union agreement with the EU in a way that will cover all new members, including Cyprus. This condition must be fulfilled before the start of entry talks, he stressed. 'The European Commission continues to support the resumption of Cyprus talks under the auspices of the United Nations. We are ready to play an active role to prepare the ground for this goal,' Rehn added. Before flying out of Istanbul Ataturk Airport on Tuesday, Rehn called on Ankara to show 'zero tolerance' toward torture, to broaden political reform, to facilitate development in southeast Turkey, and to stabilize the economy. He cautioned that the road to accession will be 'long, uneven and winding.'

US Accuses Islamist Paper of Working With Al-Qaeda Websites: The US Embassy in Ankara claimed that the Islamist-oriented "Yeni Safak" daily used a report taken from a jihadist website to accuse American forces of using chemical weapons in Iraq, "Milliyet" reports. According to the Embassy statement, the real source of the report was the pro-al-Qaeda Islammemo.cc website. The statement notes that the false claim later appeared on the official Cuban news service, Prensa Latina. The story appeared in newspapers in Turkey, Iran, and China, according to the Embassy.

AKP, CHP Unite to Counter Armenian 'Genocide' Claims: On Tuesday, PM Tayyip Erdogan told a press conference in Ankara after talks with opposition leader Deniz Baykal that Turkey is ready to open its archives to those who charge that Turks committed 'genocide' against Armenians in 1915. He also called for an unbiased study by historians of such claims. 'If there remains a need for a political settling of accounts after such a study takes place,' Erdogan said, 'then Turkey's government and opposition are ready to do that.' Baykal joined Erdogan at the press conference to stress his party's backing for an independent inquiry into the accusations, which he said are being fed by 'political lobby groups' and others with a political agenda.

Minorities' Hands 'Tied' on Property Assets: Turkey's National Property Directorate hurriedly sold a building it had seized from the 'Surp Pircic Armenian Hospital' in Istanbul without waiting for the outcome of an appeal by the Armenian community to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) to annul the sale, "Radikal" reports on its front page. Hrant Dink, editor-in-chief of Turkey's only Armenian daily, "Agos," sharply criticized the sale, saying that 'mafia' methods had been used to expropriate and sell the property. Dink said that 41 assets of the Armenian community had been confiscated through decisions by the Court of Cassation (Yargitay).

Denktas Approves New Coalition Government in North Cyprus: Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktas approved a new coalition government on Tuesday presented by outgoing PM Mehmet Ali Talat, who won early elections last month. The new government is a renewed alliance between Talat's Republican Turkish Party (CTP) and the Democrat Party (DP) of Serdar Denktas. Talat's CTP won led the February 20 polls, gaining 24 seats in the 50-member parliament, while Denktas' DP obtained 6 seats. Talat is widely expected to run in the April 17 presidential elections in north Cyprus. If Talat is elected president, papers expect CTP Secretary-General Ferdi Sabit Soyer to follow him as the next 'prime minister.'

Erdogan-Annan to Meet in Spain: PM Tayyip Erdogan is to meet tomorrow with UN Secretary General Kofi Annan at an international security symposium organized by the "Club de Madrid" in Madrid, Spain. Erdogan is expected to urge Annan to renew attempts to resolve the Cyprus question under a United Nations framework, "Yeni Safak" reports.

Fifth Lawmaker Quits AKP: Mehmet Erdemir, a member of parliament from the ruling AK Party's nationalist wing, resigned from the party on Tuesday, saying party had become too far removed from the people who elected it. He charged that decision-making in the AKP is concentrated in a few hands, and that democracy is being blocked. The AKP retains a large majority, holding 362 seats in the 550-seat parliament.

Protests Against Emine Erdogan on Headscarf Issue: All papers report small protests against Emine Erdogan during her appearance yesterday at a conference at Ankara's Bilkent University. As the Prime Minister's wife was delivering her remarks, two leftist students began shouting and were roughly removed from the hall by Mrs. Erdogan's security detail. Four young women in headscarves subsequently held up signs protesting the Government's inaction on the headscarf issue. The women were escorted from the hall by female police.

EDITORIAL OPINION: The Syrian Pull Out

"No to War"
Mete Cubukcu commented in the leftist-opinion maker "Birgun" (3/9): "A small group of Turks who stand against all wars and occupations paid a modest but effective visit to Syria to draw attention to such dangers in the region. Around sixty people from the 'East Conference Initiative' and the 'Global Peace and Justice Coalition' went to Damascus to give support to the Syrian people in their struggle against the threat of war and occupation. The main aim of the civilians who went there was to express their opposition to the occupation policies in the region and draw the Turkish people's attention to this issue. This was an entirely civilian initiative undertaken order to bring these occupation policies to the world's agenda. The people of this delegation oppose repressive policies all over the world, including in Turkey. . Syria is nothing more than a symbol to show that we should not surrender ourselves to repressive policies. Therefore, the joint message from our trip to Syria is rather important: 'La Lil Harp,' which means 'No to War.'" (embassy editor's note: the 'purely civilian' delegation from Turkey met with Mrs. Asad and several ministers of the Syrian Government during the visit to Damascus.)

"The Peace is Still Far Away"

Kenan Akin observed in the nationalist "Ortadogu" (3/9):
"In May 2000, Israel ended its 22-year occupation of South Lebanon. This initiative has increased the pressure on Syria to withdraw its military forces from Lebanon as well. In June 2001, Syrian forces pulled out from large areas of the Beirut region. In September 2004, the UN Security Council demanded that Syria withdraw its military forces from Lebanon and refrain from interference in Lebanon's internal affairs. At the insistence of Syria, the Lebanese Parliament extended the term of the pro-Syrian President Lahud. Former Prime Minister Hariri was killed in an assassination on February 14. After this development, Syria started to withdraw its military forces from Lebanon, heeding a warning from the United States. But still, the winds of war in the region have not stopped. One danger is that the Syrian 'hawks' may use this withdrawal as a pretext to take action against the young President Assad. It is a well established custom that the Syrian military topples presidents who oppose it."

EDELMAN